

Remote training program for preservation and conservation provided by NDL

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1 Introduction

The National Diet Library (NDL) has been providing a remote training program covering the theory of preservation as well as restoration techniques, titled “Basic idea of preservation and conservation,” based on the experience of the on-site training. The NDL has produced seven courses in the remote training program; “Basic knowledge for digitization of materials,” “Some old Japanese books,” “Science and technology information—introduction,” “Science and technology information—reports produced under grants-in-aid for scientific research, doctoral dissertations and standards,” “How to research information on economy, trade and industry,” “Libraries and copyright” and “Basic idea of preservation and conservation,” which was the first to be developed. One of the reasons was that the NDL had accumulated training know-how through the group training program. Another reason was that we identified various issues in preservation and conservation through the program, and were aware that there was a need for training in the field.

2 Outline of the course

2.1 Creation and manpower

In creating the remote training program for preservation and conservation, the Preservation Division of the Acquisitions Department (now Acquisitions and Bibliography Department) in the Tokyo Main Library took charge of developing the content of course materials, and the Library Support Division in the Kansai-kan handled the project management. Plural-duty officers for preservation and conservation, who are in divisions other than the Preservation Division and are serving concurrently for the work of the Preservation Division including research and study on preservation and conservation, also joined to develop the content of course materials. Information about how to preserve photos and microforms was commissioned to outside experts.

2.2 Policy for developing course materials

The course materials were developed under the following policy:

- The training should be at a basic level to learn the fundamental knowledge of preservation and conservation
- The training is not intended to produce technical experts, but is aimed at general librarians
- The training focuses on measures which are necessary and feasible for all libraries regardless of the kind
- The training emphasizes the importance of prevention rather than restoration, and of management rather than technique
- The training uses course materials in Japanese, but their contents should have a global commonality
- The remote training program “Basic idea of preservation and conservation” covers the basic content of general preservation and conservation, and the group training program “Preservation and Conservation Training Program” features repair and restoration

2.3 Content of course materials

Based on the above policy, the training opens with an explanation of the necessity of preservation and conservation of materials, and makes trainees learn the appropriate environment and measures for preservation. The table of contents of each chapter, the objectives and contents and the average time needed for learning are as follows.

Chapter I Introduction: Basic viewpoint of preservation and conservation

Section 1 Basic idea of preservation and conservation

Section 2 Main causes of material deterioration

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Section 3 History of preservation and conservation

Learning objective: Learn the basic viewpoint and idea of preservation and conservation

Average time for learning: 90 min.

Chapter II Preservation environment and conservation measures

Section 1 Preservation environment

Section 2 Security and disaster prevention

Section 3 Preservation measures for printed materials—Part 1 Protection and handling

Section 4 Preservation measures for paper materials—Part 2 Media conversion

Section 5 Preservation measures for photos and microfilms

Section 6 Preservation measures for audio-visual materials

Learning objective: Learn the concept of appropriate storage and use including causes of material deterioration and storage environment, and measures for preservation

Average time for learning: 330 min.

Chapter III Idea of preservation and management, and methodology

Section 1 Preservation and management

Section 2 Research for preservation and conservation

Section 3 Development, implementation and evaluation of preservation plans

Section 4 Preservation cooperation activities

Learning objective: Learn the methodology of implementing the basic idea of preservation and conservation and preservation measures learnt in Chapters I and II, in a systematic and organized way

Average time for learning: 90 min.

Comprehension test

25 questions from Chapters I, II and III to check the trainees' understanding

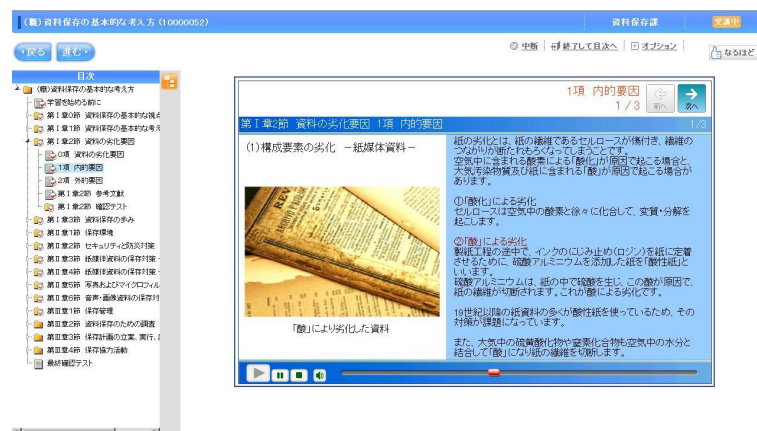
Supplemental course materials: "Making of preservation container," "Quick repair," "Binding of Japanese-style books" and "Materials and equipment"

2.4 Technology of the system used and standards

As regards the learning management system (LMS), the existing system named "Learning Station" has been adopted, and course materials prepared in accordance with SCORM1.2 standard have been loaded. The SCORM is a standard for ensuring the interoperability of the learning systems and contents of e-learning. Therefore, if it becomes necessary to change to other LMS, we can load the

standard-compliant course materials onto the new LMS and operate for a long time without major renovation.

The LMS renewed in FY 2010 and the screen has changed so it has become easier for trainees to understand visually and to operate (Photo 1). The greatest change brought about by the replacement is to provide using SaaS (software as a service) which means we purchase only services from a vendor. At the time of starting the remote training program, we installed necessary devices such as servers inside the library to provide the LMS, but we now have been able to provide at a low price without reducing the service level.



<<Photo 1: A screen from “Basic idea of preservation and conservation” (causes of paper deterioration) >>

3 Operation and State of Implementation

3.1 Operation

The term of training is three to four months. One can apply for the course through an application form on the NDL website. After confirming that the applicant is indeed a librarian, we issue an ID and a password to access the LMS.

Instruction messages given by the LMS are visual and auditory; it is said that the combination of both elements magnifies learning efficacy. Questions are accepted by the Library Support Division via e-mail and answers are prepared by the Preservation Division, and are in turn transmitted by the former. We send e-mails of encouragement during the period of training, to keep trainees motivated. After a trainee completes all the curricula and scores 80 out of 100 on the last examination, a certificate is sent from the Library Support Division in PDF format.

3.2 State of Implementation

We have held the “Basic idea of preservation and conservation” course seven times (twice in FY2006) from June 1, 2006 to FY2011, reaching capacity every time. The number of trainees was 435 (181 in the 1st term and 254 in the 2nd) in FY2006, 201 in FY2007, 200 in FY2008, 154 in FY2009, 251 in FY2010 and 151 in FY2011. The type of participating librarians varies, though academic librarians are predominant in every term. We also have the participation of Japanese studies librarians from abroad; 9 in 2006, 9 in 2007, 11 in 2008, 2 in 2010 and 2 in 2011.

Additionally, as a part of MLA (Museum, Library and Archive) collaboration, we have been accepting the participation of staff from museums and archives since 2010 (2010 and 2011 on a trial basis). The NDL has long learned from museums and archives on preservation; it is now time to give our training in return.

4 Reception

Trainees are asked to answer questionnaires on a voluntary basis. The response has been highly favorable, many trainees commenting that their attitude towards preservation had changed and that the training had been practical. It seems that many photographs have helped trainees' understanding. “Exceptionally good contents” in course materials, according to over half of the respondents (2011) are practice-oriented ones such as “Preservation measures for printed materials - Part 1 Protection and handling”, “Preservation measures for paper materials - Part 2 Media conversions” and “ Preservation measures for photos and microfilms.”

We received numerous opinions and requests, “too many course materials” prominently among them. We had been well aware from the beginning of the possible burden imposed by course materials for trainees. However, in view of our objective to provide a comprehensive training package on preservation from basic idea to practice, we decided that it is unavoidable. Furthermore, there is also a request that latest information should be added.

Concerning the system, many trainees pointed out that it would have been much more helpful, had the images, especially of repairing and making a preservation container, been animated. The system allows trainees to download course materials as well as to use them online. However, as both materials are viewable in the same format, some trainees commented that they would like the usability of downloaded materials to be improved.

5 Achievements and Further Challenges

The remote training program “Basic idea of preservation and conservation” has been carried out seven times since 2006 and 1392 trainees have completed the training. Compared with the group

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training program “Preservation and Conservation Training Program” available for 40 trainees annually, it has seen far larger participation and had a largely favorable reception.

Progress has been made but challenges remain. As mentioned above, the content of the “Basic idea of preservation and conservation” has not sufficiently caught up with the developments in the field of preservation. Digitization of information is ever on the march and it is already mainstream to digitize materials to preserve them. We have just begun preparing to revise our course materials accordingly.

In the case of the group training program, we often receive thanks for giving direct, detailed guidance for repair work. We need to offer more comprehensible, usable course materials for the remote training program as well. As pointed out in the questionnaires, room for improvement remains, such as employing moving images and making downloaded materials more easily viewable.

We foresee many possibilities to improve the system, such as enabling interaction between trainees and exchange of opinions between the staff of remote libraries, and using for mobile learning.